

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO JOHN 3

**Ver. 1.** *There was a man of the Pharisees*, etc.] The Syriac version adds, “there”; that is, at Jerusalem; and who was among those that believed in the name of Christ, upon seeing the miracles he did at the feast of the passover, in that place. This man was not a common and ordinary man, but a man of note and eminence, of dignity and figure; and who was of the sect of the Pharisees, which was the strictest sect for religion and holiness, among the Jews; and which, as corrupt as it was, was also the soundest; as having not only a regard to a Messiah, and to all the writings of the Old Testament, but also believed the doctrines of angels and spirits, and the resurrection of the dead, which the Sadducees denied; but yet they were implacable enemies of Christ; and therefore it is the more to be wondered at, that such an one should come to him, and desire a conversation with him:

*named Nicodemus*; frequent mention is made of *ˆwyrwg ˆb ˆwmydqn*, “Nicodemon ben Gorion”, the brother of Josephus ben Gorion<sup>f109</sup>, the writer of the Wars and Antiquities of the Jews; and there are some things which make it probable, that he was the same with this Nicodemus; for the Nicodemon the Jews speak so much of, lived in this age; as appears, not only from his being the brother of Josephus, but also from his being contemporary with R. Jochanan ben Zaccai, who lived in this time, and until the destruction of the temple; since these two are said<sup>f110</sup> to be together at a feast, made for the circumcision of a child. Moreover, he is represented as very rich, and is said to be one of the three rich men in Jerusalem<sup>f111</sup>, and who was able to have maintained *hnydm*, a city ten years<sup>f112</sup>; and they speak of his daughter, as exceeding rich: they say, that she had for her dowry a thousand thousand golden denarii, or pence; and that her bed was strewed with (i.e. the furniture of it cost) twelve thousand golden denarii; and that a Tyrian golden denarius was spent upon her every week, for a certain kind of soup<sup>f113</sup>; and the wise men decreed her four hundred golden denarii, for a box of spices every day<sup>f114</sup>; and it is elsewhere<sup>f115</sup> said, five hundred: and this our Nicodemus was very rich, as

appears from his liberality at the funeral of our Lord, (~~609~~ John 19:39). Moreover, the Nicodemon of the Jews, is said to be a counsellor<sup>f116</sup> in Jerusalem; and so was this, as seems evident from (~~402~~ John 7:32,50,51) and it may be further observed<sup>f117</sup>, that the right name of Nicodemon, was Boni<sup>f118</sup>; now Boni elsewhere<sup>f119</sup>, is said to be one of the disciples of Jesus, as Nicodemus was secretly, and perhaps at, and after his death openly, as his associate Joseph of Arimathea was; to which may be added, the extreme poverty that his daughter is by them said to be reduced unto; for they report, that R. Jochanan ben Zaccai saw her gathering barley corns from under the horses' hoofs in Aco<sup>f120</sup>; or as it is elsewhere said, out of the dung of the beasts of the Arabians; when she asked alms of him, and he inquired of her, what was become of her father's substance. Now to this low estate, the family of our Nicodemus might be reduced, through the persecution of the Christians by the Jews. The name is Greek, as at this time many Greek names were in use among the Jews, and signifies the same as Nicolas; but the Jews give an etymology of it, agreeably to the Hebrew language; and say, that he was so called, because the sun, **hdqn**, "shone out for his sake": the occasion and reason of it, they tell us, were this<sup>f121</sup>; Nicodemon, upon want of water at one of the feasts, agreed with a certain man for twelve wells of water, to be returned on such a day, or pay twelve talents of silver; the day being come, the man demanded the water, or the money; Nicodemon went and prayed, and a plentiful rain fell, and filled the wells with water; but meeting the man, he insisted on it that the day was past, the sun being set, and therefore required the money; Nicodemon went and prayed again, and the sun shone out; and they add, that there are three persons for whom the sun **hmdqn**, "was prevented", detained, or hindered in its course, (a word nearer his name than the former,) Moses, and Joshua, and Nicodemon ben Gorion; for the two former they produce Scripture, and for the latter tradition: hence it is elsewhere said<sup>f122</sup>, that as the sun stood still for Joshua, so it stood still for Moses, and for Nicodemon ben Gorion: but to proceed with the account of our Nicodemus, he was

*a ruler of the Jews*; not a civil magistrate; for the civil government was now in the hands of the Romans; but an ecclesiastical ruler; he was a member of the sanhedrim, which consisted of the doctors, or wise men, and priests, Levites, and elders of the people; and so was a dignified person, and as afterwards called, a master in Israel.

**Ver. 2.** *The same came to Jesus by night*, etc.] Through fear of the Jews, of being reproached or turned out of his place by them; or through shame, that such a doctor as he was, should be known to go to Jesus of Nazareth, to be instructed by him; or lest he should offend any of his brethren of the sanhedrim: though some things may be said in favour of this conduct of Nicodemus; for since Christ would not trust himself with those that believed in him upon seeing his miracles, (<sup><4123></sup>John 2:23,24), among whom Nicodemus seems to be; or would not admit them into his company, and enter into a free conversation with him; it was necessary, that if he would have any discourse with him, that he should take this method; and if it was the same night, in which he had seen his miracles in the day, as is probable, he took the first opportunity he could, and which shows great readiness and respect; add to which, that it was very common with the Jewish doctors, to meet and converse together, and study the law in the night.

“R. Aba rose, *ayl yl twgl pb*, “in the middle of the night”, and the rest of the companions, to study in the law <sup>f123</sup>.”

And it is often <sup>f124</sup> said of R. Simeon ben Joehal, and Eleazar his son, that they sat in the night and laboured in the law; and it was reckoned very commendable so to do, and highly pleasing to God: it is said <sup>f125</sup>,

“whoever studies in the law in the night, the holy blessed God draws a thread of mercy upon him in the day:”

and likewise <sup>f126</sup>, that

“every one that studies in the law in the night, the Shekinah is over against him.”

But it seems, the Babylonian Jews did not study in the law in the night <sup>f127</sup>: it might seem a needless question to ask, whether Nicodemus came alone, or not, were it not that according to the Jewish canon <sup>f128</sup> a scholar might not go out in the night alone, because of suspicion:

*and said unto him, Rabbi*; a title which now greatly obtained among the Jewish doctors, and of which they were very fond; (see Gill on <sup><4127></sup>Matthew 23:7”). It comes from a word, which signifies great and large; and was used by them, to suggest the large compass, and great plenty of knowledge they would be thought to have had; and best becomes and suits with our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all the treasures of wisdom

and knowledge are: salutations among the Jews, were forbidden in the night <sup>f129</sup>;

“says R. Jochanan, it is forbidden a man to salute his neighbour in the night, lest it should be a demon:”

but here was no such danger; nor was this salutation made in the street, and in the dark, which the canon seems to respect:

*we know that thou art a teacher come from God*; the Jews expected the Messiah as a teacher, which they might learn from many prophecies, as from (<sup><212></sup>Isaiah 2:2,3 48:17 61:1). Upon the first of which, and on that passage in it, “he will teach us of his ways”, a noted commentator <sup>f130</sup> of theirs has this remark;

“*hrwmh*, “the teacher”, he is the King Messiah.”

And the Targum on (<sup><212></sup>Joel 2:23) paraphrases the words thus:

“O ye children of Zion, rejoice and be glad in the word of the Lord your God, for he will return *^wkpl m ty*, “your teacher” to you.”

And Nicodemus acknowledges Jesus as such; and as one that did not come, or was sent by men, as their doctors were; nor did he come of himself, as false teachers did; but he came from God, and had his mission and commission from him: and this was a known case, a clear point, not only to himself, but to many of the Jews; and even to some of his brethren, the members of the sanhedrim; who upon hearing of, and seeing the miracles done by Christ, might meet and converse freely together about him; and give their sentiments of him; and might then agree pretty much in this at that time, that he was at least a prophet, and some extraordinary teacher, whom God had sent among them; and Nicodemus coming directly from them, repeats his own sense and theirs, supported by the following reason:

*for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, [except] God be with him*: referring to the miracles he had done at the passover in Jerusalem, very lately; (see <sup><212></sup>John 2:23). And which, though they are not particularly mentioned, may be concluded to be such, as the dispossessing of devils, the curing of all manner of diseases by a word, or touch, from what he at other times, and elsewhere did. Miracles were expected by the Jews, to be wrought by the Messiah, and many believed in Jesus on this account; (see

<sup><RB4</sup>John 6:14 7:31); though the modern Jews deny it to be necessary, that miracles should be done by the Messiah <sup>f131</sup>; but Nicodemus, and other Jews, thought otherwise, and considered the miracles of Christ as such, as could never be done by man, nor without the presence and power of God; and concluded that he was with God, and God with him, and was the true Immanuel, who is God with us.

**Ver. 3.** *Jesus answered and said unto him*, etc.] Not to any express question put by Nicodemus; unless it can be thought, that a question of this kind might be asked, what is the kingdom of God, so much spoken of in thy ministry? and what is requisite to the seeing and enjoying of it? though not recorded by the evangelist; but rather to the words of Nicodemus, concluding from his miracles, that he was the Messiah; and that the kingdom of God was now approaching, or the world to come, the Jews so much speak of; and in which all Israel, according to their notion, were to have a part <sup>f132</sup>; and which notion, our Lord in the following words, seems to oppose:

*verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*; Nicodemus, according to the general sense of the nation, thought that when the Messiah came, and his kingdom was set up, they should all share in it, without any more ado; they being the descendants of Abraham, and having him for their father: but Christ assures him, that he must be “born again”; in distinction from, and opposition to his first birth by nature; in which he was vile, polluted, carnal, and corrupt, being conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and was a transgressor from the womb, and by nature a child of wrath; and in opposition to, his descent from Abraham, or being born of him, and of his seed; for this would be of no avail to him in this case, nor give him any right to the privileges and ordinances of the kingdom of God, or the Gospel dispensation; (see <sup><RB9</sup>Matthew 3:9); as also to birth by proselytism; for the Jews have a frequent saying <sup>f133</sup>, that

“one that is made a proselyte, *ymd dl wnç ˆwj qk*, “is like a child new born”.”

Which they understand, not in a spiritual, but in a civil sense; such being free from all natural and civil relations, and from all obligations to parents, masters <sup>f134</sup>, etc. And by this phrase our Lord signifies, that no man, either as a man, or as a son of Abraham, or as a proselyte to the Jewish religion,

can have any true knowledge of, or right unto, the enjoyment of the kingdom of God, unless he is born again; or regenerated, and quickened by the Spirit of God; renewed in the spirit of his mind; has Christ formed in his heart; becomes a partaker of the divine nature; and in all respects a new creature; and an other in heart, in principle, in practice, and conversation; or unless he be “born from above”, as the word is rendered in (<sup>אָרִי</sup> John 3:31); that is, by a supernatural power, having the heavenly image stamped on him; and being called with an heavenly calling, even with the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: if this is not the case, a man can have no true knowledge of the kingdom of the Messiah, which is not a temporal and carnal one; it is not of this world, nor does it come with observation; nor can he have any right to the ordinances of it, which are of a spiritual nature; and much less can he be thought to have any true notions, or to be possessed of the kingdom of grace, which lies in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; or to have either a meetness for, or a right unto the kingdom of glory: though by the following words it seems, that the word is rightly rendered “again”, or a second time, as it is by Nonnus.

**Ver. 4.** *Nicodemus saith unto him*, etc.] Understanding him of a natural birth, to be repeated:

*how can a man be born when he is old?* as it seems by this, he himself now was:

*can he enter the second time into his mothers womb, and be born?* the Ethiopic version adds, “again”; and the Arabic version, “and then be born”; this he urges, as absurd, impracticable, and impossible; and which shows him to have been as yet a natural man, who could not receive nor discern spiritual things.

**Ver. 5.** *Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee*, etc.] Explaining somewhat more clearly, what he before said:

*except a man be born of water and of the Spirit:* these are, **תּוּנֶּץ תּוּל מ**, “two words”, which express the same thing, as Kimchi observes in many places in his commentaries, and signify the grace of the Spirit of God. The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, “the Holy Spirit”, and so Nonnus; and who doubtless is intended: by “water”, is not meant material water, or baptismal water; for water baptism is never expressed by water only, without some additional word, which shows, that the ordinance of water baptism is intended: nor has baptism any regenerating influence in it;

a person may be baptized, as Simon Magus was, and yet not born again; and it is so far from having any such virtue, that a person ought to be born again, before he is admitted to that ordinance: and though submission to it is necessary, in order to a person's entrance into a Gospel church state; yet it is not necessary to the kingdom of heaven, or to eternal life and salvation: such a mistaken sense of this text, seems to have given the first birth and rise to infant baptism in the African churches; who taking the words in this bad sense, concluded their children must be baptized, or they could not be saved; whereas by "water" is meant, in a figurative and metaphorical sense, the grace of God, as it is elsewhere; (see <sup><B></sup>Ezekiel 36:25 <sup><B></sup>John 4:14). Which is the moving cause of this new birth, and according to which God begets men again to, a lively hope, and that by which it is effected; for it is by the grace of God, and not by the power of man's free will, that any are regenerated, or made new creatures: and if Nicodemus was an officer in the temple, that took care to provide water at the feasts, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, and as it should seem Nicodemon ben Gorion was, by the story before related of him; (see Gill on "<sup><B></sup>John 3:1"); very pertinently does our Lord make mention of water, it being his own element: regeneration is sometimes ascribed to God the Father, as in (<sup><B></sup>1 Peter 1:3 <sup><B></sup>James 1:18), and sometimes to the Son, (<sup><B></sup>1 John 2:29) and here to the Spirit, as in (<sup><B></sup>Titus 3:5), who convinces of sin, sanctifies, renews, works faith, and every other grace; begins and carries on the work of grace, unto perfection;

*he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;* and unless a man has this work of his wrought on his soul, as he will never understand divine and spiritual things, so he can have no right to Gospel ordinances, or things appertaining to the kingdom of God; nor can he be thought to have passed from death to life, and to have entered into an open state of grace, and the kingdom of it; or that living and dying so, he shall ever enter into the kingdom of heaven; for unless a man is regenerated, he is not born heir apparent to it; and without internal holiness, shall not enter into it, enjoy it, or see God.

**Ver. 6.** *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh,* etc.] Man by his natural birth, and as he is born according to the flesh of his natural parents, is a mere natural man; that is, he is carnal and corrupt, and cannot discern spiritual things; nor can he, as such, enter into, and inherit the kingdom of God; (see <sup><B></sup>1 Corinthians 2:14 15:50). And therefore there is a necessity of his being born again, or of the grace of the Spirit, and of his becoming a spiritual man; and if he was to be, or could be born again of the flesh, or

ever so many times enter into his mothers womb, and be born, was it possible, he would still be but a natural and a carnal man, and so unfit for the kingdom of God. By “flesh” here, is not meant the fleshy part of man, the body, as generated of another fleshy substance; for this is no other than what may be said of brutes; and besides, if this was the sense, “spirit”, in the next clause, must mean the soul, whereas one soul is not generated from another: but by flesh is designed, the nature of man; not merely as weak and frail, but as unclean and corrupt, through sin; and which being propagated by natural generation from sinful men, cannot be otherwise; for “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one”, (~~1814b~~ Job 14:4). And though the soul of man is of a spiritual nature, and remains a spirit, notwithstanding the pollution of sin; yet it being defiled with the flesh, and altogether under the power and influence of the lusts of the flesh, it may well be said to be carnal or fleshly: hence “flesh”, as it stands opposed to spirit, signifies the corruption of nature, (~~1817~~ Galatians 5:17); and such who are in a state of unregeneracy, are said to be after the flesh, and in the flesh, and even the mind itself is said to be carnal, (~~1818~~ Romans 8:5-8).

*And that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit:* a man that is regenerated by the Spirit of God, and the efficacy of his grace, is a spiritual man; he can discern and judge all things of a spiritual nature; he is a fit person to be admitted to spiritual ordinances and privileges; and appears to be in the spiritual kingdom of Christ; and has a right to the world of blessed spirits above; and when his body is raised a spiritual body, will be admitted in soul, body, and spirit, into the joy of his Lord. “Spirit” in the first part of this clause, signifies the Holy Spirit of God, the author of regeneration and sanctification; whence that work is called the sanctification of the Spirit, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, (~~1800~~ 1 Peter 1:2 ~~1805~~ Titus 3:5). And “spirit”, in the latter part, intends the internal work of grace upon the soul, from whence a man is denominated a spiritual man; and as a child bears the same name with its parent, so this is called by the same, as the author and efficient cause of it: and besides, it is of a spiritual nature itself, and exerts itself in spiritual acts and exercises, and directs to, and engages in spiritual things; and has its seat also in the spirit, or soul of man.

**Ver. 7.** *Marvel not that I said unto thee,* etc.], For Nicodemus was quite astonished, at this doctrine of the new birth; it was altogether new to him, and unheard of by him; nor could he understand, nor conceive in what manner it could be:



*ye must be born again*; in “four” of Beza’s copies, it is read “we”; but as Christ was not begotten in a carnal way, or descended not from Adam in the ordinary way of generation, he was not carnal and corrupt, nor in the least tainted with sin; and so stood in no need of regeneration; wherefore such a reading must be rejected. There is a necessity of the regeneration of those, who are the chosen of God, and the redeemed of the Lamb; and of them only can the words be understood; for as for others, they neither can, nor will, nor must be born again: but the people of God “must”; partly because it is the will of God; it is his purpose and resolution, that they shall be regenerated; he has chosen them, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto salvation by Christ: this is the way and method of saving sinners he has fixed upon, namely, not to save them by works of righteousness, but by grace, and according to abundant mercy, through the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost: and partly, because of the case and condition of men, which requires it; for whereas the chosen people of God, are predestinated to the adoption of children, and are taken into the family of God, and are heirs to an inheritance, it is necessary they should have a nature, temper, and disposition of mind, suitable to the inheritance they are to enjoy; which they have not in their natural estate, and which is conveyed to them in regeneration: besides, their carnal minds are enmity to God, and it is necessary that they should be friendly to him, which cannot be without regeneration; nor can they, till they are born again, please God, or do those things which are pleasing to him: to which may be added, which Christ has before suggested, and which shows the necessity of it, that without it, no man can either see, or enter into the kingdom of God. To take off the surprise of Nicodemus, our Lord instances in a common natural case, and to which this affair of regeneration may be compared, and by it illustrated.

**Ver. 8.** *The wind bloweth where it listeth*, etc.] For ought any mortal can say, or do to the contrary: and so the Spirit of God is a free agent in regeneration; he works how, and where, and when he pleases; he acts freely in the first operation of his grace on the heart, and in all after influences of it; as well as in the donation of his gifts to men, for different purposes; (see [1 Corinthians 12:11](#)); and this grace of the Spirit in regeneration, like the wind, is powerful and irresistible; it carries all before it; there is no withstanding it; it throws down Satan’s strong holds, demolishes the fortifications of sin; the whole posse of hell, and the

corruptions of a man's heart, are not a match for it; when the Spirit works, who can let?

*and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*; as the wind, though its sound is heard, and its force felt, it cannot be seen; nor is it known certainly, from whence it comes, and where are the treasures of it; from whence it begins, and where it ends; so is the grace of the Spirit of God in regeneration to a natural man; it is imperceptible, indiscernible, and unaccountable by him, (<sup><4124></sup>1 Corinthians 2:14).

*So is every one that is born of the Spirit*: he is regenerated by grace, that is, as free and sovereign, as powerful and irresistible, and as secret and imperceptible, as the wind is: and seeing so ordinary a thing as the blowing of the wind is of such a nature, and so little to be accounted for; regeneration by the Spirit of God, who is comparable to the wind, and whose name so signifies, need not be thought so marvellous and astonishing, though the natural man discerns it not, and cannot account for it. The beauty and propriety of this simile will more appear by observing, that the same Hebrew word, **יַרְוַח**, is used both for the wind, and for the Spirit of God; it is used for the "wind", in (<sup><1008></sup>Genesis 3:8 8:1 <sup><1191></sup>1 Kings 19:11 <sup><2006></sup>Ecclesiastes 1:6); and in other places, and for the Spirit of God, in (<sup><1002></sup>Genesis 1:2 6:3 <sup><8304></sup>Job 33:4), and elsewhere: and so likewise the Greek word **πνεῦμα**, is used for them both, for the wind in this place, and often for the Holy Ghost: and it may be observed, that the Holy Spirit, because of his powerful, comfortable, and quickening influences, is compared to the wind, especially to the south wind, in some passages of the Old Testament, which Christ might have in view, (<sup><2046></sup>Song of Solomon 4:16 <sup><8014></sup>Zechariah 9:14). What our Lord here says, concerning the wind, is confirmed by all experience, and philosophical observations; the rise of winds, from whence they come, and whither they go, cannot be ascertained; the treasures of them are only with God, and known to him; (see <sup><2106></sup>Ecclesiastes 11:5).

**Ver. 9.** *Nicodemus answered and said unto him*, etc.] Remaining still as ignorant as ever, though Christ had explained the phrase "born again", at which he stumbled, by a being "born of water and of the Spirit", or of the grace of the Spirit of God; and had illustrated this by the free, powerful, and invisible blowing of the wind:

*how can these things be?* The Arabic version reads, “how can this be?” referring either to the last thing said, that a man’s being born of the Spirit, is like the blowing of the wind; or to the explanation of the first expression, that a man should be born of water, and of the Spirit; or to the first assertion itself, that a man should be born again; which notwithstanding the explanation and illustration, seemed as impossible, and as impracticable as ever; or rather to them all, and so the Persic version reads, “how can all these things be?”

**Ver. 10.** *Jesus answered and said unto him*, etc.] Upbraiding him with his continued and invincible ignorance, which was aggravated by his dignified character:

*art thou a master in Israel?* or “of Israel”, as all the Oriental versions render it, as it literally may be rendered he was one of the **l arçy ymkj** , “wise men”, or “doctors of Israel”<sup>f135</sup>, so often mentioned by the Jews. One of the Jewish doctors was answered, by a boy, just in such language as is here used; who, not understanding the direction he gave him about the way into the city, said to him, **l arçy l ç µkj aw hta**, “art thou he, a doctor”, or “master of Israel?” did not I say to thee so? etc.<sup>f136</sup>. He was not a common teacher; not a teacher of babes, nor a teacher in their synagogues, or in their “Midrashim”, or divinity schools, but in their great sanhedrim; and the article before the word used will admit it to be rendered, “that master”, doctor, or teacher; that famous, and most excellent one, who was talked of all over Jerusalem and Judea, as a surpassing one: and now, though he was not only an Israelite, with whom were the laws, statutes, judgments, and oracles of God, the writings of Moses, and the prophets; but a teacher of Israelites, and in the highest class of teachers, and of the greatest fame among them, yet was he ignorant of the first and most important things in religion:

*and knowest not these things?* which were so plainly to be suggested in the sacred writings, with which he was; or ought to have been conversant: for the same things Christ had been speaking of, are there expressed by a circumcision of the heart; by a birth, a nation’s being born at once; by sanctification; by the grace of God signified under the metaphor of water; and by quickening persons, comparable to dry bones, through the wind blowing, and breathing into them, (<sup><3816></sup>Deuteronomy 30:6 <sup><3421></sup>Isaiah 49:21 66:8 Ezekiel 36: 25 37:9,10).

**Ver. 11.** *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know*, etc.] Meaning either himself, and John the Baptist his forerunner, who preached the same doctrine of regeneration, internal sanctification, and evangelical repentance, as well as outward reformation, as necessary to entrance into the kingdom of heaven, or the Gospel dispensation, he declared was just at hand; or his disciples with himself, who were now with him, and whom he had called to preach the same truths he himself did; or the prophets of the Old Testament, who agreed with him in these things; or the Father that was with him, and never left him alone, and the Holy Spirit that was upon him, by whom he was anointed to preach these things, and who spoke them in him; or else he may use the plural number of himself alone, as being one in authority, and speaking with it, as he sometimes did, (~~ADFD~~ Mark 4:30), and the rather this seems to be the sense, since he immediately, in the next verse, speaks in the singular number, “if I have told you earthly things”, etc. Now Christ must needs thoroughly, and certainly know what he spoke, since he was not only the omniscient God, but, as Mediator, had all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him, and the spirit of wisdom and knowledge rested on him:

*and testify that we have seen*; and therefore ought to have been received as a credible witness, as he was a faithful one; since “seeing” and “knowing” are qualifications in a witness, (~~FRB~~ Leviticus 5:1); and though these were eminently in Christ, the generality of the Jews gave no credit to his testimony:

*and ye received not our witness*; which was an aggravation of their sin and unbelief; (see ~~FRB~~ John 3:32).

**Ver. 12.** *If I have told you earthly things*, etc.] Not that the doctrines he delivered were earthly ones; for he was not of the earth, but from heaven, and above all, and so spake not of the earth, but of heaven, (~~FRB~~ John 3:31); and this doctrine of regeneration was an heavenly doctrine; and the thing itself required supernatural power, and grace from above: but either they were the more easy doctrines of the Gospel; or were delivered in a plain and easy style, and illustrated by similes taken from earthly things, as from human birth, from the water, and from the wind:

*and ye believe not*; i.e. those things; ye do not receive them, nor give credit to them; or “me”, as the Ethiopic Version adds, who relate them on the best evidence, having fully known, and clearly seen them:

*how shall ye believe*; give credit to me, or receive my testimony:

*if I tell you of heavenly things*? of the more sublime doctrines of the Gospel, such as the descent of the Messiah from heaven; the union of the two natures, human and divine, in him; his being the only begotten Son of God; his crucifixion and death, signified by the lifting up of the serpent on a pole in the wilderness; and the wonderful love of God to the Gentile world in giving Christ to, and for them; and the salvation, and eternal happiness of all that believe in him, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; and these delivered in language suitable to them, without figures, or natural similes, which help the understanding, and convey ideas of things more easily to it.

**Ver. 13.** *And no man hath ascended into heaven*, etc.] Though Enoch and Elias had, yet not by their own power, nor in the sense our Lord designs; whose meaning is, that no man had, or could go up to heaven, to bring from thence the knowledge of divine and heavenly things; in which sense the phrase is used in (<sup><B12></sup>Deuteronomy 30:12 <sup><B16></sup>Romans 10:6), and which may be illustrated by (<sup><B18></sup>John 1:18); wherefore inasmuch as Nicodemus had acknowledged Christ to be a teacher come from God, our Lord, would have him know, that he was the only teacher of heavenly things, as being the only person that had been in heaven, and in the bosom of the Father; and therefore, if he, and the rest of the Jews, did not receive instructions from him, they must for ever remain ignorant; for there never had been, nor was, nor could be, any mere man that could go up to heaven, and learn the mysteries of God, and of the kingdom of heaven, and return and instruct men in them:

*but he that came down from heaven*; meaning himself, who is the Lord from heaven, and came from thence to do the will of God by preaching the Gospel, working miracles, obeying the law, and suffering death in the room of his people, and thereby obtaining eternal redemption for them. Not that he brought down from heaven with him, either the whole of his human nature, or a part of it; either an human soul, or an human body; nor did he descend locally, by change of place, he being God omnipresent, infinite and immense, but by assumption of the human nature into union with his divine person:

*[even] the son of man which is in heaven*; at the same time he was then on earth: not that he was in heaven in his human nature, and as he was the son of man; but in his divine nature, as he was the Son of God; (see <sup><B18></sup>John 1:18); though this is predicated of his person, as denominated from the

human nature, which was proper to him only in his divine nature; for such is omnipresence, or to be in heaven and earth at the same time: just as on the other hand God is said to purchase the church with his blood, and the Lord of glory is said to be crucified, (<sup>4008</sup>Acts 20:28 <sup>4008</sup>1 Corinthians 2:8), where those things are spoken of Christ, as denominated from his divine nature, which were proper only to his human nature; and is what divines call a communication of idioms or properties; and which will serve as a key to open all such passages of Scripture: and now as a proof of our Lord's having been in heaven, and of his being a teacher come from God, and such an one as never was, or can be, he opens and explains a type respecting himself, in the following verse.

**Ver. 14.** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,* etc.] The history referred to is in (<sup>4008</sup>Numbers 21:8). There is, in many things, an agreement between this serpent, and Jesus Christ: as in the matter of it, it was a brazen serpent; it was made not of gold, nor of silver, but of brass, the meaner metal, and was a very unlikely means, of itself, to heal the Israelites; and might be despised by many: this may denote the meanness of Christ in his human nature, in his birth and parentage, and place of education and converse; and especially in his crucifixion and death; and which, to an eye of carnal sense and reason, seemed a very improbable means of saving sinners; and therefore were to some a stumbling block, and to others foolishness: though on the other hand, as brass is a shining metal, and might be chose for the serpent in the wilderness to be made of, that by the lustre of it the eyes of the Israelites might be attracted and directed to it, who were at the greatest distance in the camp; so it may be expressive of the glory of Christ, as the only begotten of the Father, and who is the brightness of his Father's glory; and which is the great attractive, motive, and inducement to engage souls to look unto him, and believe in him, (<sup>2362</sup>Isaiah 45:22); and whereas brass is both a strong and durable metal, it may signify the strength of Christ, who is the mighty God, and mighty to save; and his duration, as a Saviour, being the same today, yesterday, and for ever: likewise, the comparison between the serpent Moses lifted up, and Christ, may be observed in the form of it. The brazen serpent had the form of a serpent, but not the poison and venomous nature of one; so Christ was sent, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was found in fashion as a man, as a sinful man, but was without sin, and was perfectly holy; and yet being in this form, was made both sin and a curse, that he might redeem his people both from sin, and from the curse of the law, by

dying a death which denominated him accursed, of which the serpent was, an emblem: besides, this serpent was a fiery one; at least it looked like one of the fiery serpents, being of brass, which shone as though it burned in a furnace; and may be an emblem both of Christ's Father's wrath, which was poured out like fire upon him, and of his love to his people, which was like burning fire, the coals whereof gave a most vehement flame. Moreover, this serpent Moses made, and was ordered to make, was but "one", though the fiery serpents, with which the Israelites were bitten, were many; so there is but one Mediator between God and man; but one Saviour, in whom alone is salvation, and in no other, even Jesus Christ. To which may be added the "situation" in which this serpent was put: it was set by Moses on a pole; it was lifted up on high, that every one in the camp of Israel might see it; and may point out the ascension of Christ into heaven, and his exaltation at God's right hand there, as some think; or his being set up in the ministry of the word, and held forth and exalted there as the only Saviour of lost sinners; or rather his crucifixion, which is sometimes expressed by a lifting up, (~~8:28~~ John 8:28 12:32). Once more, there is an agreement in the effect that followed upon the lifting up of the serpent; and which was the design of it, viz. the healing of such Israelites as were bitten by the fiery serpents, who looked to this: for as the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents, with the poison of which they were infected, and were in danger of death, and to many of them their bitings were mortal; so men are poisoned with the venom of the old serpent the devil, by which they are subjected to a corporeal death, and are brought under a spiritual, or moral death, and are liable to an eternal one: and as these bitings were such as Moses could not cure; so the wounds of sin, through the old serpent, are such as cannot be healed by the law, moral or ceremonial, or by obedience to either; and as they were the Israelites who were convinced of their sin, and acknowledged it, and had a cure by looking to the brazen serpent; so such whom the Spirit of God convinces of sin, and to whom he gives the seeing eye of faith, these, through seeing, the Son, and looking to Jesus, as crucified and slain, receive healing by his stripes and wounds: and as those, who were ever so much bit and poisoned by the fiery serpents, or were at ever so great a distance from the pole, or had the weakest eye, yet if they could but discern the serpent on the pole, though it only appeared as a shining piece of brass, had a cure; so the greatest of sinners, and who are afar off from God, and all that is good, and who have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, or but glimmering view of Christ, of his glory, fulness, and suitableness, shall be saved by him. To add no more, this was done "in the

wilderness”: which may signify this world, Christ’s coming into it, his crucifixion in it, and his going without the camp, bearing our reproach, or suffering without the gates of Jerusalem. It is certain, that the Jews had a notion that the brazen serpent was symbolical and figurative: Philo the Jew makes it to be a symbol of fortitude and temperance <sup>f137</sup>; and the author of the apocryphal book of Wisdom <sup>f138</sup>, calls it “a sign of salvation”. They thought there was something mysterious in it: hence they say <sup>f139</sup>,

“in four places it is said, “make thee”, etc. In three places it is explained, viz. (<sup><0064></sup>Genesis 6:14 <sup><0102></sup>Numbers 10:2 <sup><007E></sup>Joshua 5:2), and one is not explained, (<sup><0208></sup>Numbers 21:8), “make thee a fiery serpent”, **צִרְיָן**, is not explained.”

And elsewhere <sup>f140</sup> they ask,

“and could the serpent kill, or make alive? But at the time that Israel looked up, and served with their hearts their Father which is in heaven, they were healed; but if not, they were brought low.”

So that the look was not merely to the brazen serpent, but to God in heaven; yea, to the word of God, his essential Logos, as say the Targumists on (<sup><0209></sup>Numbers 21:9). The Jerusalem Targum paraphrases the words thus:

“and Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a high place, and whoever was bitten by the serpents, and lift up his face, in prayer, to his Father which is in heaven, and looked upon the serpent of brass, lived.”

And Jonathan ben Uzziel paraphrases them thus:

“and Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a high place; and it was, when a serpent had bitten any man, and he looked to the serpent of brass, “and directed his heart”, **יַד אַרְמַיִם מִוְּצֵל**, “to the name of the word of the Lord”, he lived.”

And this healing they understand not only of bodily healing, but of the healing of the soul: for they observe <sup>f141</sup>, that

“as soon as they said, “we have sinned”, immediately their iniquity was expiated; and they had the good news brought them “of the healing of the soul”, as it is written, “make thee a seraph”; and he does not say a serpent; and this is it: “and it shall come to pass, that



every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live”,  $\zeta\text{pnh}$   $\text{tawpr}$ , “through the healing of the soul”:

yea, they compare the Messiah to a serpent; for so the Targum on (<sup>2949</sup>Isaiah 14:29) paraphrases that passage:

“the Messiah shall come forth from Jesse’s children’s children; and his works shall be among you as a “flying serpent”.”

And who else can be designed by the “other serpent of life”<sup>f142</sup>, and the “holy serpent”<sup>f143</sup> they speak of, in opposition to the evil serpent that seduced Eve? And it is well known, that  $\zeta\text{j n}$ , “a serpent”, and  $\text{j ycm}$ , “Messiah”, are numerically, or by gematry, the same; a way of interpretation, and explanation, often in use with the Jews. Now, as this serpent was lifted up on a pole on high, that every one that was bitten with the fiery serpent might look to it, and be healed;

*even so must the son of man be lifted up*; upon the cross, and die: the crucifixion and death of Christ were necessary, and must be, because of the decrees and purposes of God, by which he was foreordained thereunto, and by which determinate counsel he was delivered, taken, crucified, and slain; and because of his own engagements as a surety, laying himself under obligations in the council and covenant of peace, to suffer, and die, in the room of his people; and because of the prophecies in the Old Testament, and his own predictions, that so it should be; as also, that the antitype might answer the type; and particularly, that he might be a suitable object of faith for wounded sinners, sensible of sin, to look unto.

**Ver. 15.** *That whosoever believeth in him*, etc.] Whether Jew or Gentile, a greater, or a lesser sinner, and of whatsoever state and condition, age or sex; and though ever so weak a believer, provided his faith, is of the right kind: not an historical or temporary one, a mere assent to the truth of things respecting his person, office, and work; but such a faith, by which a soul sees a glory, fulness, and suitableness in him as a Saviour; goes to him, ventures on him, commits itself to him, lays hold on him, and receives him, leans and relies upon him, and trusts in him, and lives upon him; and which is the faith of God’s elect; a gift of his grace, and the operation of his Spirit; and which works by love, and is attended with the fruits of righteousness: now the end of Christ’s crucifixion and death is, that such an one

*should not perish*; though he is in a lost and perishing condition in Adam, and by nature, and sees himself to be so, and comes to Christ as such; and though his frames and comforts are perishing, and he sometimes fears he shall be utterly lost; and though he is subject to slips and falls, and great spiritual decays; and shall perish as to the outward man by death; yet he shall never perish eternally, or be punished with everlasting destruction, as the wicked will:

*but have eternal life*; not by his works, but as the gift of God: and which he that truly believes; has already in the covenant of grace, in Christ his head, in faith and hope; and has the earnest and pledge of it, the Spirit of God; and the beginning of it, which is the knowledge of God in Christ; and shall hereafter possess it fully, and in person, to all eternity: even a life of perfect holiness and knowledge; a life of never ending pleasure; a life free from all the sorrows, distresses, and imperfections of this; and which will always continue.

**Ver. 16.** *For God so loved the world*, etc.] The Persic version reads “men”: but not every man in the world is here meant, or all the individuals of human nature; for all are not the objects of God’s special love, which is here designed, as appears from the instance and evidence of it, the gift of his Son: nor is Christ God’s gift to every one; for to whomsoever he gives his Son, he gives all things freely with him; which is not the case of every man. Nor is human nature here intended, in opposition to, and distinction from, the angelic nature; for though God has showed a regard to fallen men, and not to fallen angels, and has provided a Saviour for the one, and not for the other; and Christ has assumed the nature of men, and not angels; yet not for the sake of all men, but the spiritual seed of Abraham; and besides, it will not be easily proved, that human nature is ever called the world: nor is the whole body of the chosen ones, as consisting of Jews and Gentiles, here designed; for though these are called the world, (<sup><4163></sup>John 6:33,51); and are the objects of God’s special love, and to them Christ is given, and they are brought to believe in him, and shall never perish, but shall be saved with an everlasting salvation; yet rather the Gentiles particularly, and God’s elect among them, are meant; who are often called “the world”, and “the whole world”, and “the nations of the world”, as distinct from the Jews; (see <sup><4112></sup>Romans 11:12,15 <sup><4110></sup>1 John 2:2) (<sup><4123></sup>Luke 12:30), compared with (<sup><4162></sup>Matthew 6:32). The Jews had the same distinction we have now, the church and the world; the former they took to themselves, and the latter they gave to all the nations around:

hence we often meet with this distinction, Israel, and the nations of the world; on those words,

““let them bring forth their witness”, that they may be justified, (~~238B~~ Isaiah 43:9) (say <sup>f144</sup> the doctors) these are Israel; “or let them hear and say it is truth”, these are “the nations of the world”.”

And again <sup>f145</sup>,

“the holy, blessed God said to Israel, when I judge Israel, I do not judge them as “the nations of the world”.”

and so in a multitude of places: and it should be observed, that our Lord was now discoursing with a Jewish Rabbi, and that he is opposing a commonly received notion of theirs, that when the Messiah came, the Gentiles should have no benefit or advantage by him, only the Israelites; so far should they be from it, that, according to their sense, the most dreadful judgments, calamities, and curses, should befall them; yea, hell and eternal damnation.

“There is a place (they say <sup>f146</sup>),) the name of which is “Hadrach”, (~~300B~~ Zechariah 9:1). This is the King Messiah, who is, *Ærwdj*, “sharp and tender”; sharp to “the nations”, and tender to “Israel”.”

And so of the “sun of righteousness”, in (~~304B~~ Malachi 4:2), they say <sup>f147</sup>,

“there is healing for the Israelites in it: but the idolatrous nations shall be burnt by it.”

And that <sup>f148</sup>

“there is mercy for Israel, but judgment for the rest of the nations.”

And on those words in (~~230D~~ Isaiah 21:12), “the morning cometh”, and also the night, they observe <sup>f149</sup>,

“the morning is for the righteous, and the night for the wicked; the morning is for Israel, and the night for “the nations of the world”.”

And again <sup>f150</sup>,

“in the time to come, (the times of the Messiah,) the holy, blessed God will bring “darkness” upon “the nations”, and will enlighten Israel, as it is said, (~~231D~~ Isaiah 60:2).”

Once more <sup>f151</sup>,

“in the time to come, the holy, blessed God will bring the nations of the world, and will cast them into the midst of hell under the Israelites, as it is said, (<sup>23BB</sup>Isaiah 43:3).”

To which may be added that denunciation of theirs <sup>f152</sup>

“woe to the nations of the world, who perish, and they know not that they perish: in the time that the sanctuary was standing, the altar atoned for them; but now who shall atone for them?”

Now, in opposition to such a notion, our Lord addresses this Jew; and it is as if he had said, you Rabbins say, that when the Messiah comes, only the Israelites, the peculiar favourites of God, shall share in the blessings that come by, and with him; and that the Gentiles shall reap no advantage by him, being hated of God, and rejected of him: but I tell you, God has so loved the Gentiles, as well as the Jews,

*that he gave his only begotten Son*; to, and for them, as well as for the Jews; to be a covenant of the people, the Saviour of them, and a sacrifice for them; a gift which is a sufficient evidence of his love to them; it being a large and comprehensive one, an irreversible and unspeakable one; no other than his own Son by nature, of the same essence, perfections, and glory with him; begotten by him in a way inconceivable and expressible by mortals; and his only begotten one; the object of his love and delight, and in whom he is ever well pleased; and yet, such is his love to the Gentiles, as well as Jews, that he has given him, in human nature, up, into the hands of men, and of justice, and to death itself:

*that whosoever believeth in him*, whether Jew or Gentile,

*should not perish, but have everlasting life*; (see Gill on “<sup>40BIS</sup>John 3:15”).

**Ver. 17.** *For God sent not his Son into the world*, etc.] God did send his Son into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, being made of a woman, and made under the law; and which is an instance of his great love, and not of any disrespect to his Son, or of any inequality between them: but then this was not

*to condemn the world*; even any part of it, or any in it: not the Gentiles, as the Jews thought he would; for though God had suffered them to walk in their own ways, and had winked at, or overlooked the times of their

ignorance, and had sent no prophet unto them, nor made any revelation of his will, or any discovery of his special grace unto them; yet he sent his Son now, not to destroy them for their idolatry, and wickedness, but to be the Saviour of them: nor the Jews; for as impenitent and unbelieving, and as wicked as they were, he did not accuse them to the Father, nor judge and condemn them; he was to come again in power and great glory, when he would take vengeance on them, and cause wrath to come upon them to the uttermost, for their disbelief and rejection of him; but this was not his business now: nor the wicked of the world in general; to judge, and condemn them, will be his work, when he comes a second time, in the day God has appointed to judge the world in righteousness.

*But* the end of his mission, and first coming is,

*that the world through him might be saved*; even the world of the elect in general, whom God determined to save, and has chosen, to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, and has appointed Christ to be the salvation of; and who being sent, came into the world to seek and save them; and his chosen people among the Gentiles in particular: wherefore he is said to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth: and all the ends of the earth are called upon to look unto him, and be saved by him, (<sup>2306</sup>Isaiah 49:6 45:22).

**Ver. 18.** *He that believeth on him is not condemned*, etc.] Whether Jew or Gentile, because a believer is openly in Christ; and there is no condemnation to those that are in him: and though the sentence of death passed upon all in Adam, and judgment came upon all men to condemnation in him; yet this sentence being executed on Christ, the surety of his people, who has been condemned to death, and has suffered it in their stead, his death is a security to them from all condemnation: and they are delivered by him from the curse and condemnation of the law: and having in conversion openly passed from death to life, they shall never enter into condemnation; and this is the happy case of every one that believes in Christ:

*but he that believeth not is condemned already.* The Persic version renders it, "from the beginning"; he remains under the sentence of condemnation passed in Adam upon him; the law accuses him, and pronounces him guilty before God; he is under the curse of it, and it is a ministration of condemnation and death to him; nor has he any thing to secure him from its charge, curse, and condemnation: this must be understood of one that is a

final unbeliever, or that lives, and dies, in a state of impenitence, and unbelief:

*because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God;* whom God has sent to be the Saviour of lost sinners, and to deliver them from wrath to come; and there is no other name but his, whereby men can be saved; so that such that do not believe in him, must be damned.

**Ver. 19.** *And this is the condemnation,* etc.] Of him that believes not in Christ; that is, this is the matter and cause of his condemnation, and by which it is aggravated, and appears to be just:

*that light is come into the world:* by which is meant, not natural or corporeal light; though natural darkness is, by some, preferred to this, being more convenient for their evil works; as by thieves, murderers, and adulterers: nor is the light of nature designed, with which every man is enlightened that comes into the world; which, though but a dim light, might be of more use, and service, than it is; and is often rejected, and rebelled against, by wicked men, and which will be the condemnation of the Heathen world: but rather the light of divine revelation, both in the law of God, and Gospel of Christ; especially the latter is here intended; and which, though so great a favour to fallen men, is despised, and denied by the sons of darkness: though it may be best of all to understand it of Christ himself, the light of the world, and who is come a light into it; (see ~~ROM~~ John 8:12 12:46), who may be called “light”, because he has set revelation in its clearest and fullest light; he has declared the whole mind, and will of God concerning the affair of divine worship, and the business of salvation: grace, and truth, are come by him; the doctrines of grace, and the truths of the Gospel, are most clearly brought to light by him; the types, and shadows of the law are removed; and the promises, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, are most largely expounded by him, and most perfectly fulfilled in him: and besides; he is the author and giver of the light of grace, by which men see themselves to be what they are, lost and undone sinners; and see him to be the only able, willing, suitable, sufficient, and complete Saviour: and he it is that now gives the saints the glimpse of glory they have, and will be the light of the new Jerusalem, and the everlasting light of his people hereafter. He, by his incarnation, may be said to “come into the world” in general, which was made by him, as God; and as he was in it, as man; though he was not known by it as the God-man, Mediator, and Messiah: and particularly he came into the Jewish world, where he was

born, brought up, conversed, lived, and died; and into the Gentile world, by the ministry of his apostles, whom he; sent into all the world, to preach the Gospel to every creature, and spread the glorious light of it in every place:

*and men loved darkness rather than light*: the Jews, the greater part of them, preferred the darkness of the ceremonial law, and the Mosaic dispensation, and even the traditions of their elders, before the clear Gospel revelation made by Christ Jesus; and the Gentiles also, for the most part, chose rather to continue in their Heathenish ignorance, and idolatry, and to walk in their own ways, and in the vanity of their minds, than to embrace Christ, and his Gospel, and submit to his ordinances, and appointments; and the generality of men, to this day, love their natural darkness, and choose to walk in it, and to have fellowship with the works of darkness, and delight in the company of the children of darkness, rather than follow Christ, the light of the world; receive his Gospel, and walk in his ways, in fellowship with his saints: the reason of all this is,

*because their deeds were evil*; which they chose not to relinquish; and Christ, his Gospel and ordinances are contrary to them; for the doctrine of the grace of God, which has appeared, and shone out in great lustre, and splendour, in the world, teaches men to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and therefore it is hated, and rejected, by men.

**Ver. 20.** *For every one that doth evil, hateth the light*, etc.] Every man, the series of whose life and conversation is evil, hates Christ and his Gospel, cause they make manifest his evil deeds, convict him of them, and rebuke him for them:

*neither cometh to the light*; to hear Christ preach, or preached; to attend on the Gospel ministration and means of grace:

*lest his deeds should be reprov'd*; or discovered, and made manifest, and he be brought to shame, and laid under blame, and advised to part with them, which he cares not to do; (see <sup>4851</sup>Ephesians 5:11-13).

**Ver. 21.** *But he that doth truth*, etc.] That which is true, right and good: “he whose work is just”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; or, “he that does that which is right”, so the Persic; that which is according to the will of God, and from a principle of love to him, and with a view to his glory:

*cometh to the light*; to Christ, and to his word, and ordinances:

*that his deeds may be made manifest*; being brought to the light, to the test, and standard, whether they, are right, or wrong; and that it may appear,

*that they are wrought in God*; or “by God”; by his assistance, and gracious influence, without which men can do nothing; for it is God that works in them both to will and to do: or, “according to God”, as others render it; according to the will of God, both for matter and manner: or “for God”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; for the glory of God, which ought to be the aim, and end of every action. The Persic version reads the whole thus, “that the work which is between God and him may be known”; that such deeds may be discovered, which are only known to God and himself.

**Ver. 22.** *After these things*, etc.] After Christ’s coming to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, with his disciples, and driving the buyers and sellers from the temple, and doing the miracles he did there, upon which many believed on him; and after the long discourse he had with Nicodemus, concerning regeneration, and other things:

*came Jesus and his disciples, into the land of Judea*; or “into Judea the country”, having been in Jerusalem, the city part or chief city in Judea; so that the country is distinguished from, and opposed to the city. And thus, a countryman, and a Jerusalemite, or citizen of Jerusalem, are distinguished <sup>f153</sup>;

“if, *yntṛqh*, “a countryman”, (one that lives in the country any where in the land of Israel out of Jerusalem <sup>f154</sup>), receives a field, *yml çwrym*, “from a man of Jerusalem”, the second tithes belong to the Jerusalemite; but the wise men say, the countryman may bring them up, and eat them at Jerusalem.”

Or, it may be, because that Jerusalem was part of it in the tribe of Benjamin, and the other in the tribe of Judah; therefore, when Christ, and his disciples, left Jerusalem, they might more properly be said to come into the land of Judea. Indeed, it is commonly said by the Jews <sup>f155</sup>, that Jerusalem was not divided among the tribes, and that it did not belong to any tribe; and if so, then with greater propriety still might Christ be said to come into the land of Judea, when he departed from Jerusalem; unless it should be thought, that he went into Galilee, and after that came into the land of Judea; so Nonnus:



*and there he tarried with them:* with his disciples, as Nonnus; and with the inhabitants of those parts: he made a longer stay here than at Jerusalem, having more work to do here, and being more delighted with the plainness and simplicity of the country people; or “he conversed” with them, as the Syriac version renders it; he exercised, and employed himself among them, as the Greek word used signifies: he went about from village to village, doing good, healing diseases, and preaching the Gospel which was made useful to many:

*and baptized;* not he himself, but his disciples, by his orders, and in his name; (see <sup><0402></sup>John 4:2); whereby he gave fresh countenance and sanction to the ordinance of water baptism, administering it to others, as well as submitting to it himself.

**Ver. 23.** *And John also was baptizing in Aenon,* etc.] The Syriac and Persic versions call it “Ain”, or “In you”, the fountain of the dove; and the Arabic version reads it, the fountain of “Nun”: and whether it was a town, or river, it seems to have its name from a fountain near it, or that itself was one, where was an abundance of water, as the text shows. There is a city of this name in the Septuagint version of (<sup><0656></sup>Joshua 15:61), and mention is made of Hazerenon in (<sup><0809></sup>Numbers 34:9 <sup><3577></sup>Ezekiel 47:17), but neither of them seem to be the same with this; but be it where, and what it will, it was

*near to Salim;* and where that was, is as difficult to know as the other, some take it to be Shalem, a city of Shechem, mentioned in (<sup><0338></sup>Genesis 33:18), but that is not the same name with this; and besides was in Samaria; and indeed is by some there thought not to be the proper name of any place. Others are of opinion, that it is the same with Shalim in (<sup><0904></sup>1 Samuel 9:4), though it seems rather to be the place which Arias Montanus calls <sup>f156</sup>“Salim juxta torrentem”, Salim by the brook; and which he places in the tribe of Issachar: and might be so called, either because it was near this Aenon, and may be the brook, or river intended, by which it was; or because it was not far from the place where the two rivers, Jabbok and Jordan, met; and so the Jewish maps place near Jordan, in the tribe of Manasseh, bordering on the tribe of Issachar, a Shalem, and by it Ain-yon. And the Septuagint in (<sup><0692></sup>Joshua 19:22) mention “Salim by the sea”, as in the tribe of Issachar. There is a passage in the Talmud <sup>f157</sup>, which, whether it has any regard to this Aenon, and Salim, I leave to be considered:

“the wine of Ogedoth, why is it forbidden? because of the village Pegesh; and that of Borgetha, because of the Saracene palace; and of Ain-Cushith, because of the village Salem.”

Nonnus here calls Aenon, a place of deep waters; and Salim he reads Salem; and so some copies. Aenon, where John baptized, according to Jerom <sup>f158</sup>, was eight miles from Scythopolis, to the south, and was near Salim and Jordan; and he makes Salim to be at the same distance from Scythopolis. However, John was baptizing in these parts, at the same time that Christ was teaching and baptizing: he did not leave off on that account. This was the work he was sent to do, and which he continued in as long as he had his liberty; and he chose this place,

*because there was much water there*; or “many waters”; not little purling streams, and rivulets; but, as Nonnus renders it, abundance of water; or a multitude of it, as in the Arabic version; (see <sup><6115></sup>Revelation 1:15 14:2 17:1 19:6 <sup><2117></sup>Song of Solomon 8:7) and the Septuagint in (<sup><17816></sup>Psalm 78:16) (<sup><19473></sup>Psalm 107:23), and what was sufficient to immerse the whole body in, as Calvin, Aretius, Piscator, and Grotius, on the place, observe; and which was agreeable not only to: the practice of the Jews, who used dipping in their baptisms, and purifications, as Musculus and Lightfoot assert; but to John’s method and practice elsewhere:

*and they came, and were baptized.* The Ethiopic version renders it, “they came to him”, that is, to John, “and he baptized them”; as the Persic version adds, “there”, in Aenon, near Salim, in the much water there: it may be understood of the people coming both to John and Christ, and of their being baptized by them; though it seems rather to be said of John; and so Nonnus paraphrases it.

**Ver. 24.** *For John was not yet cast into prison.*] As he afterwards was by Herod, for the sake of Herodias, because he reprov’d Herod for taking her to be his wife, when she was wife to his brother Philip; (see <sup><4043></sup>Matthew 14:3,4); and this circumstance shows, that these things were done before that journey of Christ into Galilee, mentioned in (<sup><1042></sup>Matthew 4:12,13).

**Ver. 25.** *Then there arose a question,* etc.] A dispute, or controversy, occasioned by the baptism, of John and Christ:

*between [some] of John’s disciples, and the Jews.* The Syriac and Persic versions read, “between one of John’s disciples, and a certain Jew”; and Nonnus renders it, “with an Hebrew man”; and so the Alexandrian

manuscript; many others read, “with a Jew”: the contention between them was

*about purifying*; either about the ceremonial purifications, and ablutions commanded in the law of Moses; or concerning the various washings of persons, and vessels, according to the traditions of the elders, which the Jews in common were very tenacious of; and which they thought were brought into neglect, and contempt, by the baptism of John: and this seems to have been occasioned by the baptism of Christ; which the Jew might improve against the disciple of John, and urge, that since another, besides his master, had set up baptizing, who could tell which was most right and safest to follow? and therefore it would have been much better, if no such rite at all had been used by any, but that the purifications required by the law of Moses, and by their elders, had been strictly and solely attended to.

**Ver. 26.** *And they came unto John*, etc.] The Persic version reads, “he came unto John”; that disciple that had the controversy with the Jew about purifying, who not knowing well how to answer him, and which might be the case of more, applied to John:

*and said unto him, Rabbi*; or “master”; or, “our master”; as the Syriac and Persic versions read, which was a title of great respect, and reverence, and much in use in those times; (see Gill on “~~413B~~ Matthew 23:7”) (see Gill on “~~413B~~ Matthew 23:8”). The Arabic version joins this word to the following clause, and applies it to Christ, rendering it thus, “the master that was with thee beyond Jordan”; which is making them to speak more honourably of Christ than they intended; for though they speak very respectfully to John, yet with much disdain and neglect of Christ; not so much as mentioning his name, or using any term of honour or respect; only saying,

*he that was with thee beyond Jordan*; namely, at Bethabara; who came from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized by him, and who was baptized by him; and for some little time continued with him, and attended on his ministry; and as they thought, was a disciple of John’s:

*to whom thou bearest witness*; that he was before him, and to be preferred unto him; and that he was the Lamb of God, and even the Son of God; suggesting, that by this testimony of his, Christ had gained all the credit and reputation he had; and that therefore he had done a wrong thing in enlarging so much in the praise and commendation of him:

*behold the same baptizeth*; takes upon him to administer the ordinance of baptism; at least gives orders to administer it; which John's disciples thought was the proper, and peculiar business of their master; and therefore speak of this as an intrusion into his office, and an entering into his province; and an assuming that which only belonged to him: and what gave still more uneasiness, and increased the complaint, was,

*and all men come to him*; that is, "many", as the Syriac and Persic versions render it, even more than came to John; (see ~~BOOK~~ John 4:1). Large multitudes from all parts flocked to hear Christ preach, and great numbers were made disciples by him, and then baptized. That he should baptize, gave them great offence; and that he was so followed, raised their envy; and his being so near to John, might add to their uneasiness. It is a rule with the Jews, that

"it is not lawful for a disciple to teach the constitutions, or sentences of the law, before his master; but must be twelve miles distant from him, as the camp of Israel."

And they say, that

"a disciple that teaches before, or in the presence of his master, is guilty of death <sup>f159</sup>."

**Ver. 27.** *John answered and said*, etc.] The Syriac and Arabic versions add, "to them"; the answer being made to the disciples of John, who came to him with their complaint:

*a man can receive nothing*; the Syriac and Persic versions add, "of his own will": some understand this of Christ, as man, who did not take upon him the character of the Messiah, nor the office of a Mediator, nor the honour of it of himself; and who received the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, without measure, and had his success in his work from above: and indeed, it is true of both Christ, and John; for as Christ, so John received his office, and honour, as the harbinger and forerunner of Christ, and all his gifts qualifying for it, and his success in it, not of himself, but of God: and since therefore the superior office, and honour, and usefulness of the one above the other, were according to the sovereign will of God, there was no room for complaint, murmuring, and envy; but there ought to be contentment and pleasure in the wise disposition of things by God. Yea, this is true of every man, who has nothing of his own; and whatever he has in nature,

providence and grace, is a gift to him; and all he enjoys is in a way of receiving: nor can he receive it,

*except it be given him from heaven*; from God who dwells there; (see Gill on “<sup><4025></sup>Matthew 21:25”); who is the author and donor of every gift, temporal, spiritual, and eternal; particularly he cannot perceive, and discern spiritual things, nor receive Gospel truths; as it appeared to John his disciples could not, unless spiritual light is given from above; and such a favour is bestowed, as to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: and therefore, for every office, whether of a superior, or inferior kind, and for every degree of honour, and for whatsoever blessing and gift, whether for soul or body, for time, or for eternity, men ought to be thankful, and not glory in them, as though they had not received them; nor is there any reason to murmur against God, or envy one another, as these disciples did.

**Ver. 28.** *Ye yourselves bear me witness*, etc.] In what they now said, and referred to, in describing Christ, as he to whom John bore witness; and he appeals to them for what he said in their presence, and before all the people in that testimony:

*that I said I am not the Christ*; (see <sup><4019></sup>John 1:19,20); wherefore, if he, who is the Christ, is now come, and teaches, and baptizes, and has the greatest number of followers, it is not to be wondered at; and much less to be envied; but rather to be rejoiced at. For John, by repeating what he had before said, that he was not the Christ, suggests, that Jesus was; and therefore was superior to him in office, honour, and usefulness, who was only his harbinger and forerunner, as follows:

*but I am sent before him*; to prepare his way, to make straight his paths, to proclaim his coming, and kingdom, being at hand; and that the expectations of men may be raised, and they may be ready to receive him when come: and hereby the end of John’s office, and ministry, had its accomplishment. The Ethiopic version adds, “to preach him”.

**Ver. 29.** *He that hath the bride*, etc.] By whom particular persons seem here to be meant, who were called, converted, and brought to Christ, and were made his disciples, and baptized, and so were openly espoused unto him; though sometimes it designs a particular church of Christ, and even the whole general assembly, and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven; all the elect of God, whether among Jews, or Gentiles; (see <sup><4112></sup>2 Corinthians 11:2 <sup><6002></sup>Revelation 21:2,9). These Christ has in a

conjugal relation; and he came, and comes to have them after this manner: he saw them in his Father's purposes, and decrees, in all the glory he meant to bring them to; and loved them, and desired them of his Father, as his spouse, who gave them to him, as such; and he betrothed them to himself for ever; and in time he sends his ministering servants with his Gospel, to engage and betroth them to him; and by the power of his grace, he makes them willing to give up themselves to him; which is the open espousal of them; and at the last day, when the number of the elect are completed, the marriage of the Lamb will be publicly solemnized, and a marriage supper will be made; and all that are called, and ready, will enter into the marriage chamber, and share in the joys, and pleasures of that day: thus by virtue of the Father's gift, Christ has them now as his own property, as his portion, his jewels, his bride, and wife; and by, and through his great love to them, he has them not only in his arms, from whence they can never be plucked; but in his heart, where they are set as a seal; and by virtue of this love, they are united to him, become one with him, are members of his body, flesh, and bones; and are one spirit with him, and nothing can be able to separate them; and he will have them all with, him to all eternity, to be where he is, and behold his glory: and now, he that has the bride in this sense,

*is the bridegroom*; and such is Christ; (see <sup><1095></sup> Matthew 9:15 25:1); and he acts, and behaves, as such; he loves the saints, as a bridegroom loves his bride, with a love prior to theirs; with a love of complacency and delight, which is single, chaste, and inviolable; free, and sovereign, wonderful, unchangeable, and from everlasting to everlasting: he sympathises with them in all their adversities, and afflictions; he nourishes, and cherishes them, and provides everything for them, for food, and clothing, for refreshment and protection; and interests them in all he has: and an amazing instance of grace this is, that such who are no better than others, children of wrath by nature; exceeding great sinners, guilty, and filthy; bankrupts, and beggars on the dunghill; and yet are taken into so near a relation to him; who is in the form of God, and equal to him, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, the Son of God, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells; the King of kings, and Lord of lords. And this being the case, John suggests, that by these persons following Christ, and giving up themselves to him, it appeared that he was the bridegroom; and to whom should they betake themselves but to him? Nor did it become him, or any other, to seek to draw them from him; nor

should any envy his enjoyment of them, since they were his in so peculiar a sense, and in so near a relation:

*but the friend of the bridegroom*; meaning himself: and such is every true minister of the Gospel; he is a lover of Christ, a friend to his interest, and seeks by all means to promote it, and to bring souls unto him. The allusion is to a custom among the Jews, who, at their marriages, used to have persons both on the side of the bride, and of the bridegroom, as companions that attended each, and were called their friends; (see <del>v74</del> Judges 14:20). Such an one is called by the Rabbins,  $\hat{y}b\zeta\omega\zeta$ ; and this word is interpreted by *bhwa*, “a lover”, or “friend”, the same as here; and by *wh[r]*, “his” (the bridegroom’s) “friend” in the time of his marriage <sup>f160</sup>. There were two of these, one for the bride, and another for the bridegroom; for so it is said <sup>f161</sup>, formerly they appointed two  $\hat{y}nyb\zeta\omega\zeta$ ,

““friends”, one for him (the bridegroom), and one for her (the bride), that they might minister to the bridegroom, and do all things at their entrance into the marriage chamber. — And formerly, these friends slept where the bridegroom and bride slept.”

And so as John is here represented as the friend of Christ, the bridegroom of the church; the Jews speak of Moses as the friend of God, the bridegroom of the people of Israel. So one of their writers <sup>f162</sup>, having delivered a parable concerning a certain king going into a far country, and leaving his espoused wife with his maid-servants, who raising an evil report on her, his friend tore in pieces the matrimonial contract, thus applies it:

“the king, this is the holy, blessed God; the maidens, these are the mixed multitude; and  $\hat{y}b\zeta\omega\zeta h$ , “the friend”, this is Moses; and the spouse of the holy, blessed God is Israel.”

The Jews say <sup>f163</sup>, that Michael and Gabriel were the  $\hat{y}nyb\zeta\omega\zeta$ , “bridal friends” to the first Adam.

*Which standeth*; the phrase may be seen in the above parable of the Jewish writer <sup>f164</sup> referred to,  $\hat{h}nyb\zeta\omega\zeta dm[$ , “his friend standeth”: this was the posture of servants, and is fitly applied to John, who was the harbinger of Christ, and judged himself unworthy to bear his shoes; and well agrees with the ministers of the Gospel, who stand before Christ, wait upon him, and minister in his name, and are the servants of the churches for his sake:

*and heareth him*; hearkens to his words; observes, and obeys them; hears his voice, so as to understand it, and distinguish it from another's; and hears it with delight and pleasure, as every true friend of Christ does his Gospel, which is his voice, and is a joyful sound; and so

*rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice*: such an one rejoices at the sight of his person, and in communion with him; he rejoices at the sound of his voice; and is delighted to hear him in the ministry of the word, calling to one, and to another, to come unto him, and causing them to believe in him, and give up themselves to him.

*This my joy therefore is fulfilled*; in Christ, he being come in person, and his voice heard in the land of Judea, and multitudes of souls flocking to him, who believing in him, were baptized; than which nothing could be a greater pleasure to John, or to any Gospel minister. This was the accomplishment and perfection of his joy, which carried it to its utmost height: this was what he wished for; and now he had the desire of his heart. It was usual for the friend of the bridegroom to carry provisions with him, and eat and drink with the bridegroom, and rejoice with him; and this rejoicing was mutual. Hence those words,

“give me *ϣϣϣϣ*, “my friend”, that I may rejoice with him:”

the gloss upon it is,

“and eat at his marriage, even as he also rejoiced, and ate at my marriage <sup>f165</sup>.”

To this rejoicing the allusion is here.

**Ver. 30.** *He must increase*, etc.] Not in stature of body, or in wisdom and understanding of mind, as man, he being come to maturity in these things already; but in fame, credit, and reputation among men; as he afterwards did in the land of Judea, by reason of his miracles and doctrines; and after that among the Gentiles, through the publication of his Gospel; and will more and more in the latter day, when he, and he alone, shall be exalted: and he must increase in the ministry of his word, which was published by him, and his disciples, throughout all the cities of Israel; and which, after his resurrection and ascension, grew and increased mightily, notwithstanding the opposition made unto it both by their civil and ecclesiastical rulers; and which, by the means of his apostles, was spread throughout the Gentile world, and will hereafter cover the earth, as the



waters do the sea: and also in his kingdom and interest, which at first were very small, like a grain of mustard seed, or like a little stone cut out of the mountain without hands; but in process of time grew exceedingly, and will, ere long, till the face of the whole earth; for the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; and of the increase of it there shall be no end. And so likewise in the number of his followers, which at first were but few in Judea, but afterwards greatly increased, and especially among the Gentiles; and will be very numerous in the latter day glory, when the nation of the Jews will be born at once, and the fulness and forces of the Gentiles are brought in:

*but I must decrease*; as he did in his esteem among the people; (see ~~EBB~~ John 5:3,5); and in his work and office, which were now come to an end, Christ, whose forerunner he was, being come; and quickly after this he was put into prison, and there put to death.

**Ver. 31.** *He that cometh from above*, etc.] Meaning Christ; not that he brought his human nature with him from heaven, or that that is of a celestial nature; but he came from heaven in his divine person, not by change of place, he being God immense and infinite, but by assumption of human nature; which he took upon him, in order to do in it his Father's will, and the work of our salvation.

*Is above all*; above John, before whom he was preferred, for he was before him; above the prophets of the Old Testament, and even above Moses, the chief of them; yea, above all the angels in heaven, being God over all, blessed for ever: wherefore all glory is to be given him; no honour is to be envied him, or detracted from him.

*He that is of the earth*; as John was, and all mankind are, being descended from Adam, who was, made of the dust of the earth; and who dwell in houses of clay, and in earthly tabernacles, which are at last resolved into their original dust:

*is earthly*; of an earthly nature, frame, temper, and disposition; (see ~~EBB~~ John 3:6). Men naturally mind earthly things; and it is owing to the Spirit and grace of God, if they mind and savour spiritual things, or have their affections set on things above, or their conversation in heaven; and even such, at times, find that their souls cleave unto the dust, and are hankering after the things of the earth:

*and speaketh of the earth*; of earthly things, as in (<RB2>John 3:12); and indeed of heavenly things, in an earthly manner, in a low way, and by similes and comparisons taken from the things of the earth; not being able to speak of celestial things, as in their own nature, and in that sublime way the subject requires: but

*he that cometh from heaven is above all*; men and angels, in the dignity of his person; and all prophets and teachers, in the excellency of his doctrine, and manner of delivering it: and therefore it is not to be wondered at, that he should be followed as he is; but rather it should seem marvellous, that he has no more followers than he has; in the Apocrypha:

“For like as the ground is given unto the wood, and the sea to his floods: even so they that dwell upon the earth may understand nothing but that which is upon the earth: and he that dwelleth above the heavens may only understand the things that are above the height of the heavens.” (2 Esdras 4:21)

**Ver. 32.** *And what he hath seen and heard*, etc.] Of the Father, of his mind and will, of his purposes and promises, of his love, grace, and mercy, in the council and covenant of peace, lying in his bosom, and being privy to all his secrets. The phrases express the clear and perfect knowledge Christ has of all truths and doctrines; he having all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him.

*That he testifieth*; fully, freely, and faithfully; withholds nothing, but declares the whole counsel of God; and is deservedly called the faithful witness, (<RB2>Revelation 1:5).

*And no man receiveth his testimony*; though it was the testimony of God, which is greater than that of man; yet few, and which were next to none at all, gave any heed or credit to it; few or none among the Jews, or among the disciples of John, or even among those that followed Christ. John, and his disciples, widely differed; they thought that all men came to Christ, and believed in him; and John thought few or none, in comparison of the numbers he could have wished, did: and indeed, no one person can receive the testimony of Christ, and believe in him, unless it be given him from above, by the grace of God: for the natural man receives not divine and spiritual things; (see <RB1>John 3:11).

**Ver. 33.** *He that hath received his testimony*, etc.] For there was here and there one that did, who believed in him as the Messiah, and embraced his

Gospel, and submitted to his ordinances, and truly and sincerely followed him: and for the encouragement of such, it is said,

*hath set to his seal that God is true*; faithful in fulfilling the promises he has made concerning the Messiah, and his coming: he firmly believes that God is true to every word of his, and will make good every promise; and this he seals, ratifies, and confirms by his embracing the testimony of Christ; whereas, on the contrary, he that believes not makes God a liar, than which, nothing can be more reproachful to him, (<sup><f150></sup>1 John 5:10). The Jews have a saying <sup>f166</sup> that “the seal of the blessed God is truth”. The Arabic version renders it, “he is already sealed, because God is true”; and the Ethiopic version, “God hath sealed him, because he is true”; namely, with his holy Spirit; (see <sup><f002></sup>2 Corinthians 1:22 <sup><f013></sup>Ephesians 1:13 4:30).

**Ver. 34.** *For he whom God hath sent*, etc.] Still meaning Christ, who was sent in human nature, in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the fulness of time; to be the Saviour of the world, of that which was lost, of the chief of sinners; and to preach the glad tidings of the Gospel, which is more especially here designed; and for which he was abundantly qualified by the Spirit of God, with which he was anointed:

*speaketh the words of God*; the words which God gave unto him; the doctrines of grace; the word of truth; the word of faith; the word of righteousness; the word of reconciliation; the words of salvation and eternal life; the whole mind and will of God; and whatever he spoke were as true as the oracles of God, and were such.

*For God giveth not the Spirit by measure [unto him]*, as he did to the prophets of the Old Testament, and to the apostles of the New; and to the ordinary ministers of the word, who have gifts differing one from another; to one is given one gift of the Spirit; and to another, another gift, as the Spirit pleaseth; and to everyone is given grace, or gifts of grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, (<sup><f007></sup>Ephesians 4:7). To which agrees what the Jews say <sup>f167</sup> of the Holy Spirit, and his gifts.

“Says R. Joden bar R. Simeon, even the waters which descend from above are not given, but, **hdmb**, “in measure”. — Says R. Acha, even the Holy Spirit, which dwells upon the prophets, does not dwell, but **l qçmb**, “in weight”.”

But the Lord Jesus has every, gift of the Spirit, and the fulness of grace in him: he is anointed with the oil of gladness, with the Holy Ghost above his fellows; and has an immeasurable unction of the holy one; which, like the precious oil poured on Aaron, descends from him to the members of his body.

**Ver. 35.** *The Father loveth the Son*, etc.] There is such a relation as that of Father and Son subsisting between the first and second persons in the Trinity; which is not by constitution and appointment: or arbitrary, arising from, and depending on the will of the first, but is natural and necessary; the second person being begotten by the first, and is of the same nature, and equally a divine person: and which relation is the foundation of the distinction of their persons; and which existed from all eternity, and co-existed with their being and essence; and is what no other stand in, angels or men, in such sense as the second person does; and is not to be conceived of, expressed and explained by us: and from this relation arises love; hence, the Son of the Father is his dear Son, the Son of his love; as he must needs be, since he is of the same nature, has the same perfections he has, and is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person: and hence he continues to love him in every form and appearance of his; in every office he sustains; in every state and condition into which he comes: he delighted in him as his elect, as chosen and appointed by him to be the Saviour of his people; he took pleasure in him as the surety of them, and when he saw him engaging as such, and declaring it was his heart to do his will, and work out their salvation; he loved him when he appeared in human nature, the form of a servant; and in his state of humiliation, more than once he declared, by a voice from heaven, that he was his beloved Son, and particularly at his baptism: and indeed, as in that, so in every thing else, he always did the things that pleased him; he loved him when he laid down his life for the sheep: when he was bruised, and his soul made an offering for sin; he loved him when on the cross, and even when he hid his face from him; when lay in the grave he left him not, nor would he suffer him to see corruption; he raised him front the dead, and gave him glory; exalted him, and received him into heaven with a welcome, and placed him at his right hand; and now looks with pleasure upon him, upon his person, his sacrifice, blood, and righteousness: and this love is a love of complacency and delight, and is from everlasting to everlasting; the evidence of which lows,

*and hath given all things into his hand*; or “by his hand”; as the doctrines of the Gospel, the gifts of the Spirit, grace, and glory: or rather, “into his hand”; with which he, being the Son of God, a divine person, is fit to be entrusted, which otherwise he would not be: *παντα*, “all”, includes “all persons”; all the angels, the good angels which are chosen in him, and he is the head of; and by whom they are confirmed in the state they are: and who are at his command and beck, and minister to him and his. The evil angels, though they have broke away from God, and rebelled against him, yet are, in some sense, in the hands of Christ, and under his power: as appears by his dispossessing them from the bodies of men on earth, his spoiling them on the cross, and triumphing over them in his ascension to heaven, and by his binding Satan a thousand years. All men are given to him; the elect in a special sense, as his bride and spouse, as his children, and as his sheep; hence, he died for them, and effectually calls them, and brings them to himself; and they shall never perish, or be plucked out of his hands, but shall have eternal life. And wicked men are, in a sense, given to him; their wrath he restrains, and makes it to praise him; he rules then with a rod of iron, and breaks them in pieces as a potter’s vessel. And “all things” also are given into his hands; all temporal things, the things of nature and providence; the light of nature, and all the gifts and attainments of it; all the good things of the world, and which are wisdom’s left hand blessings; and Christ disposes of them to his people in mercy, and as covenant ones: all spiritual things are in his hands; all the gifts of the Spirit, and the fulness of all grace, sanctifying, justifying, pardoning, adopting, and persevering grace; all the promises and blessings of the covenant; the government of the church, and the judgment of the world; all power, both in heaven and in earth; the salvation of the elect, and their eternal inheritance, happiness, and glory. For all which, creature, angels or men, are fit, only the Son of God.

**Ver. 36.** *He that believeth on the Son*, etc.] Who is a proper object of faith and trust; which, if he was not truly and properly God, he would not be: and this is to be understood not of any sort of faith, a temporary, or an historical one; but of that which is the faith of God’s elect, the gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit; by which a man sees the Son, goes unto him, ventures and relies upon him, and commits himself to him, and expects life and salvation from him; and who shall not be ashamed and confounded; for such an one

*hath everlasting life*; he has it in Christ his head, in whom he believes; he has a right unto it through the justifying righteousness of Christ, and a meetness for it by his grace; he has it in faith and hope; he has the beginning of it in the knowledge of Christ, and communion with him; he has some foretastes of it in his present experience; and he has the earnest and pledge of it in his heart, even the blessed Spirit, who works him up for this selfsame thing:

*and he that believeth not the Son*; that does not believe Christ to be the Son of God, or Jesus to be the Messiah; or rejects him as the Saviour; who lives and dies in a state of impenitence and unbelief:

*shall not see life*; eternal life; he shall not enter into it, and enjoy it; he shall die the second death. Very remarkable are the following words of the Jews <sup>f168</sup> concerning the Messiah, whom they call the latter Redeemer:

“whosoever believes in him “shall” live; but he that believes not in him shall go to the nations of the world, and they shall kill him.”

*But the wrath of God abideth on him*; as the sentence of wrath, of condemnation, and death, and the curse of the law were pronounced upon him in Adam, as on all mankind, it continues, and will continue, and will never be reversed, but will be executed on him, he not being redeemed from it, as his final unbelief shows; and as he was by nature a child of wrath, as others, he remains such; and as the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, it comes upon the children of disobedience, and remains there; it hangs over their heads, and lights upon them, and they will be filled with a dreadful sense of it to all eternity. The Syriac and Arabic versions render it, “shall abide upon him”; so some copies.